

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 DOTE-00 L-03 SCI-06

CEQ-02 EPA-04 SS-15 NSC-10 PA-03 PRS-01 USIA-12 RSR-01

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R 151633 Z JUN 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1945

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

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COMMERCE FOR OICA, DOT, FAA

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, PINT, UK

SUBJECT: TROUBLE FOR THE MAPLIN AIRPORT PROJECT

REF: LONDON A-507

1. THE GOVERNMENT SUFFERED A POLITICAL SETBACK ON
JUNE 13 WHEN 15 TROY MPS, DEFYING THE GOVERNMENT WHIPS,
MANAGED TO PASS AN AMENDMENT TO THE MAPLIN AIRPORT
DEVELOPMENT BILL. THE AMENDMENT CAME DURING THE REPORT
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STAGE AND INSERTED A CLAUSE REQUIRING THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTER TO REVIEW TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO AIRCRAFT AND IF APPROPRIATE TO "DELAY, VARY OR DESIST" FROM IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT. IF UNCHANGED DURING THE PASSAGE OF THE BILL THROUGH LORDS, THE AMENDMENT COULD RESULT IN POSTPONING A START ON THE GIANT PROJECT FOR A LONG TIME. ACCEPTING THAT EVEN THE DAMAGING AMENDMENT WAS PREFERABLE TO STARTING ALL OVER AGAIN, THE GOVERNMENT WAS PREFERABLE TO STARTING ALL OVER AGAIN, THE GOVERNMENT PUT THE BILL TO ITS THIRD AND FINAL READING AND IT PASSED WITH A 9 VOTE MAJORITY.

2. MOST OF THE REBEL MPS IN THIS CASE ARE FROM CONSTITUENCIES THAT WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE MAPLIN PROJECT.

3. THERE HAS BEEN GREAT CONTROVERSY OVER THE MAPLIN AIRPORT/ SEAPORT PROJECT (ESTIMATED TO COST AROUND 1 BILLION POUNDS) SINCE ITS FORMATIVE STAGE. ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND RESIDENTS IN THE AREA TO BE AFFECTED HAVE FOUGHT TOOTH AND NAIL TO FRUSTRATE THE PROJECT AND THERE HAS BEEN SOME QUESTION RAISED BY A CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY REPORT THAT A THIRD AIRPORT WOULD BE REQUIRED AS EARLY AS 1980 (REF). HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS CONVINCED THAT A NEW MAJOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IS ESSENTIAL TO RELIEVE PRESSURES BUILDING UP ON HEATHROW AND GATWICK. IT HAS BEEN PREPARED TO PUSH THE MAPLIN THROUGH DESPITE ITS UNPOPULARITY.

4. COMMENT: THE GOVERNMENT OBVIOUSLY DOES NOT RELISH THIS POLITICAL DEFEAT, THOUGH IT IS A RELATIVELY MINOR ONE. THE COST- BENEFIT RATIO OF THE MAPLIN PROJECT, AS HAS BEEN THE CASE WITH CONCORDE AND THE PROPOSED CHUNNEL, HAS NEVER BEEN COMPLETELY CONVINCING TO A LARGE SECTOR OF THE PUBLIC AND HAS PROVIDED MUCH GRIST FOR THE MILLS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S OPPONENTS. ONCE COMMITTED, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD OBVIOUSLY HAVE PREFERRED TO PROCEED RAPIDLY TO IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT.

5. AS FOR NEXT STEPS, IT IS POSSIBLE THE GOVERNMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WILL ATTEMPT TO REVERSE ITS DEFEAT BY ELIMINATING THE OFFENDING AMENDMENT IN LORDS. IT CAN EQUALLY BE EXPECTED THAT OPPONENTS OF THE PROJECT ARE SUFFICIENTLY HEARTENED BY THEIR COMMONS' SUCCESS TO TRY TO PREVENT SUCH A GOVERNMENT MANEUVER.

ANNENBERG

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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To: BONN
BRUSSELS
COPENHAGEN
DUBLIN
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LUXEMBOURG
PARIS

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